Études/Inuit/Studies

LAUGRAND, Frédéric, Jarich OOSTEN and François TRUDEL (eds), 2006 *Apostle to the Inuit: the journals and ethnographic notes of Edmund James Peck, the Baffin years, 1894-1905,* Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 498 pages.

Nicole Stuckenberger

Volume 31, numéro 1-2, 2007

Tchoukotka
Chukotka

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/019741ar
DOI : https://doi.org/10.7202/019741ar

Aller au sommaire du numéro

Éditeur(s)

Association Inuksiutiit Katimajiit Inc.
Centre interuniversitaire d'études et de recherches autochtones (CIÉRA)

ISSN

0701-1008 (imprimé)
1708-5268 (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

Citer ce compte rendu

Stuckenberger, N. (2007). Compte rendu de [LAUGRAND, Frédéric, Jarich OOSTEN and François TRUDEL (eds), 2006 *Apostle to the Inuit: the journals and ethnographic notes of Edmund James Peck, the Baffin years, 1894-1905,* Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 498 pages.] *Études/Inuit/Studies*, *31*(1-2), 383–386. https://doi.org/10.7202/019741ar

L'ouvrage raconte, en kalaallisut comme en danois, l'histoire de ce lieu et de ceux qui l'ont occupé. Arrivés d'Allemagne en 1733 (leur nom groenlandais, *Noorliit*, signifie d'ailleurs «les Allemands»), les frères moraves venaient épauler les pasteurs luthériens (présents au Groenland depuis 1721) dans leur travail d'évangélisation des Inuit. Issus de la première réforme protestante, prêchée en Bohême et en Moravie (d'où leur nom) par Jean Hus au 15^{e} siècle, ils se spécialisaient dans la conversion des populations jugées «difficiles», c'est-à-dire peu enclines à adopter le christianisme. Dans le cas du Groenland — et du Labrador, où les moraves s'installèrent en 1771 — cette difficulté avait été surestimée puisque les Inuit y devinrent assez rapidement chrétiens.

Les quatre premiers chapitres de l'ouvrage décrivent de façon détaillée la vie des Moraves et de leurs ouailles: arrivée des premiers missionnaires (1733), construction du bâtiment encore en place (1747) et, surtout, apport des frères moraves à la vie spirituelle, sociale, culturelle (c'étaient de grands musiciens) et intellectuelle (ils ont eu un impact important sur l'étude du kalaallisut, grâce surtout aux travaux du linguiste Samuel Kleinschmidt) de la colonie groenlandaise. En 1900, ils quittent le Groenland, l'Église luthérienne danoise ayant décidé de reprendre le contrôle de la vie religieuse du pays. Ny Herrnhut passe alors aux mains de l'État danois (chapitre 5), qui l'utilise à diverses fins (ferme d'élevage du renard, résidence pour fonctionnaires, etc.). Au cours des années 1970, on en fait un embryon de musée national groenlandais jusqu'à ce que l'université du Groenland, nouvellement créée, s'y installe en 1987 (chapitre 6).

L'ouvrage est intéressant, bien documenté (à partir de nombreuses sources manuscrites et publiées) et, surtout, il est agrémenté de gravures, photos et autres illustrations qui lui donnent une valeur iconographique certaine. Signalons, entre autres (p. 41), une gravure de 1757 avec légende en français, qui représente un «Baptême des Groenlandois» dans la grande salle de la mission morave, aujourd'hui utilisée par Ilisimatusarfik comme amphithéâtre principal pour ses cours et conférences.

Louis-Jacques Dorais
CIÉRA
Université Laval
Pavillon De Koninck
Québec, Québec G1K 7P4, Canada
louis-jacques.dorais@ant.ulaval.ca

LAUGRAND, Frédéric, Jarich OOSTEN and François TRUDEL (eds)
2006 *Apostle to the Inuit: the journals and ethnographic notes of Edmund James Peck, the Baffin years, 1894-1905,* Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 498 pages.

The Reverend Edmund James Peck was an Anglican priest with the British Church Missionary Society. He was sent to work as the first Christian missionary in the South Baffin region in 1894. The journals and ethnographic notes of Reverend Peck, Uqammaq by his Inuit name, make the reader witness a period of dynamic and drastic

changes in Inuit religious, social, and economic ways of life—developments that reach far into today's southern Baffin Island Inuit community life and the place of Christianity therein (*e.g.*, Stuckenberger 2005). Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Inuit of Cumberland Sound came into increasingly intensive and continual contact with (usually) men of European ancestry, such as whalers, traders, and missionaries. These newcomers provided access to the market economy and income to participate in it, new materials, health care, and education as well as catastrophic epidemics, alcohol and other destructive elements. These agents presented conflicting images of western life to the Inuit. Peck, for example, repeatedly mentioned his annoyance with the morals of the whalers who tempted Inuit women into sexual relationships.

North American and European archives contain rich holdings of manuscripts that emanated from Baffin Island between the 18th and early 20th centuries. Materials, such as whaling logbooks, private journals, travel accounts, and early ethnographic notes and reports, notably those by Franz Boas who travelled the area in the 1880s, reflect various European approaches to the northern lands. Few of these documents are published and easily accessible to the public. Boas' diaries are one of the notable exceptions (Müller-Wille 1998). The archival and published resources provide a solid resource on Inuit culture during the period of early and later intensified contact that need to be read critically and with reference to their historic and cultural settings. These materials also provide insights into the complexities of the relationships between Inuit and the outsiders.

The publication of the journals and the rich ethnographic notes of Peck is a most important addition to the published, contextualized, and annotated manuscript material available for that region and time. The documents cover Peck's years in southern Baffin Island from 1894 until 1905. Peck started his mission work in the eastern Hudson Bay region in 1876 and came to Uumanarjuaq/Blacklead Island, Cumberland Sound in 1894. Uumanarjuaq became the centre of the Anglican mission on Baffin Island and the Kivalliq. An important part of his "Native Church Policy" was to become fluent in the local language to communicate the Gospel in the vernacular, spoken and written, and to educate selected Inuit to become catechists. He introduced literacy in a syllabic writing system developed by the Anglican missionaries to deal economically with the often long phrases typical for agglutinative languages, such as Inuktitut. Within the next 11 years, Peck, fellow missionaries, and more importantly Inuit catechists themselves spread the Gospel by travelling and by distributing the legendary "red books" containing biblical texts in Inuktitut.

Peck's competence in Inuktitut, his long-term presence in the area, and success in making converts that were particularly knowledgeable in the shamanic beliefs and practices gradually gave him privileged access to data on many aspects of Inuit daily life and on shamanic beliefs and practices. Peck noted down his observations and the stories told to him in journals and specifically in his ethnographic notes. The journals were intended to be read by the Church Missionary Society and some to be used for publication. He prepared the ethnographic notes with Inuit working with him. These were mostly in response to a request by Franz Boas to supply him with Inuit stories,

translations of stories that Boas had collected, and with information on Inuit shamanic beliefs. Most of these materials were in manuscript form and some parts seem never to have reached Boas; and Boas did not publish all the data that he had received.

By painstaking transcription, careful editing and contextual annotations, the editors of this volume make these particularly rich resources on 19th century Inuit ways of life, relations to outsiders, strategies employed and dynamics evolving from missionisation accessible to the public. The data is framed within self-reflections of a man who went to the North to change it: "He interrupted me [Peck] by saying that we were both conjurors, or, in other words, that there was no difference between my preaching the Gospel and his heathen incantations. I was led, therefore to speak to him very plainly and to point out, in no unkind spirit, I hope, the real difference between our objects" (p. 39). *Apostle to the Inuit* is introduced by a chronology of the Church Missionary Society in South-Baffin 1894-1904, contextualized by a chapter dealing with the foundation of the Anglican Mission on Baffin Island. Following this setting of the stage, the volume presents Peck's journals and his ethnographic documents in two separate parts, each with an introduction into the history and significance of the material. Part 1, "The Journals," present Peck's diaries. These journals do not provide a day to day account, but often summarize longer periods in paragraphs of various lengths. They deal with mission activities; Peck's views on the moral state and living conditions of the Inuit; confirmation of the Reverend's zeal in the face of difficulty; and they describe aspects of social life, climate, subsistence and emerging market economy, interactions with whalers and traders, and demographic dynamics of the southern Baffin Inuit.

"The Ethnographic Documents" of Part 2 deal primarily with Inuit pre-Christian beliefs and practices. This part contains five different ethnographic documents, some written by Peck or translated by him: 1) "Eskimo Heathen Customs"; 2) an untitled document consisting of a description of the annual cycle of hunting (possibly by the hand of Eve Nooeyout, one of the first baptized women), an excerpt of Christian faith by Eve Nooeyout, and a few stories told by her; 3) an untitled document containing two stories by Eve Nooeyout and detailed information on shamanism, possibly provided by the women Oosotapik and Qoojessie, annotated with notes and reflections by Peck; 4) "Eskimo Mythology and Customs" including a detailed list of helping spirits; and 5) "The Eskimos, Their Beliefs, Characteristic and Needs" that functioned as an introduction to Peck's list of helping spirits. The editors introduce each section and also include a condensed list of the 347 spirits collected by Peck (published and used also in Laugrand et al. 2000; Laugrand et al. 2003 both in collaboration with Inuit of Cumberland Sound and as part of Nunavut Arctic College workshops involving also other Inuit communities). The book is complemented by more than 20 Inuit drawings of daily life scenes, photographs, map, and figures, but lacks a list of illustrations that would have helped navigate through the material. An extensive reference list ordered by types of material and an index of names with references to the journal entries in which the individuals appear provide an excellent starting point for further research on related topics and personalities.

This volume holds great interest for anyone interested in Inuit ways of life and social change, the history of Christian missionisation, and relationships between Inuit and outsiders. It also provides a case study of Peck, who situates himself with respect to his own personality, his employer, and the larger British Christian community, his family, and the Inuit he stayed with as an intruder, guest, and part of society. These are autobiographical comments about a missionary actively trying to convert the Inuit in his own words. His path was not as single-minded and straight-forward as we might assume, but was filled at times with doubts. On Sunday, September 13, 1904, on returning from a visit home, he wrote in his journal: "Here I am again on this desert island. But why? Surely 'for His sake and the Gospels.' And could I be severed from those I love for nobler ends? Certainly not. Fear not then the future" (p. 185). To researchers interested in today's dynamics in Arctic religious life, such as the arrival of Pentecostal ministries or the Baha'i movement, the volume provides great comparative resources to study processes of continuity and change in Inuit religious and community life.

References

LAUGRAND, Frédéric, Jarich OOSTEN and Maaki KAKKIK
2003 *Keeping the faith,* Iqaluit, Nunavut Arctic College and Nortext, Memory and History in Nunavut, 3.

LAUGRAND, Frédéric, Jarich OOSTEN and François TRUDEL
2000 *Representing tuurngait*, Iqaluit, Nunavut Arctic College and Nortext, Memory and History in Nunavut, 1.

MÜLLER-WILLE, Ludger (ed.)
1998 *Franz Boas among the Inuit of Baffin Island 1883-1884: Journals and letters*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

STUCKENBERGER, A. Nicole
2005 *Community at play: social and religious dynamics in the modern Inuit community of Qikiqtarjuaq,* Amsterdam, Rozenberg Publishers.

Nicole Stuckenberger
Institute of Arctic Studies
Dartmouth College
6214 Haldeman Center
Hanover, NH 03755, USA
anja.nicole.stuckenberger@dartmouth.edu